



Effectiveness of Ellis Marriage Therapy Training (Rational-Emotional-Behavioral Approach) on Decreasing Marital Conflicts of Spouses in Bandar Abbas

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ABSTRACT: This study aims to investigate the effectiveness of Ellis marriage therapy training on decreasing marital conflicts among spouses. It is a semi-experimental, test-pretest study that uses a control group. The sample consisted of 30 spouses who had visited marriage consulting centers of Bandar Abbas in 2012, and were randomly grouped into control and study groups. The data was collected using marital conflicts questionnaire. Co-variance was used in order to analyse the data. The results obtained in this study indicated that marital conflicts between spouses decreased after training.

Keywords: Ellis Marriage Therapy, Spouses, Marital Conflicts.

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INTRODUCTION

All through the history, family has hold a particular position in humanity's thought and the issues related to family have been the concerns of so many scholars. Scholars are of the conviction that healthy family make up a healthy society. When family environment encompasses a healthy and constructive environment and when there are warm and interactive relationships among the family members, it could result in the development and progress of the family members (Gholamipoor and Abedi, 2011).

Inter-individual interactions are defined as some sort of interactions in which people express their tendencies, perspectives, and opposing opinions (Kline et al., 2006). In another definition, marital conflicts are lack of constant and meaningful agreement between couples as reported by at least one of them. Here meaningful means the effect of an issue on the performance of couples and constant means the disagreements that are not resolved by time (Halford, 2001).

A conflict happens when actions of one individual interfere with the actions of another. When two people get closer to one another, this conflict force is increased. The intensity of conflict leads to the occurrence of disagreements, aggressiveness, and fights and will eventually ruin the foundation of family (KEW-Cheung, 1996). Couples who manage to solve the conflicts in their relationships through using positive approaches and lower use of negative interactions create an atmosphere in which there is more opportunity for self-disclosure and agreement about family problems (Johanson, 2003). With regards to marriage therapy and intervention in family, there

are different practical models based on different perspectives that mainly aim to help couples to prevent conflicts, increase family efficiency, as well as decrease marital conflicts (Peterson, 2002). Cognitive therapy couple be an effective factor in changing these factors and Ellis Theory is among these cognitive therapies.

Cognitive therapy is a general term that is used for a number of therapy methods which focus on destructive and inaccurate thoughts that are roots of emotional, behavioral, and inter-personal conflicts and attempt to use different techniques to change destructive and negative thoughts to cure the person (Flangan, and Flangan, 2004).

Haber et al. (1985) concluded in their study that cognitive marriage therapy helps to decrease conflicts (Najafluyi, 2003).

In another study, ZolfaghariMotlagh (1998) studied the effectiveness of logical-emotional therapy. The results were indicative of the decrease in conflicts and imbalance dimensions in inter-personal relationships of couples as the result of education (. ZolfaghariMotlagh, 1998). Farahbakhsh et al. (2004) studied and compared the effectiveness of marriage consultation based on Ellis cognitive approach, reality therapy of Glasser and a combination of both with regards to the decrease in marital conflicts. On the whole, all three techniques of marriage therapy helped to decrease marriage conflicts, but the combination approach was more effective than Ellis marriage therapy but not more effective than Glasser approach. There is not a significant difference between Glasser and combination approaches. On the

whole, all three techniques helped to decrease conflicts (Farahbakhsh et al., 2004).

The results of a study by Alimardani et al. (2010) indicated that the court process did not leave any effect on decreasing marital conflicts and its dimensions in couples who had filed for divorce; however, the consulting process helped to decrease marital conflicts and their dimensions in couples filing for divorce (Alimardani et al., 2010). Based on what was mentioned above, this study aims to investigate if Ellis marriage therapy training would help to decrease marital conflicts?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study is a semi-experimental project, being a test-pretest study with a control group. Statistical population of this study includes couples visiting marriage consultancy centers of Bandar Abbas city in 2012. 30 individuals (15 couples) volunteered and formed the study group. The same number of couples formed the control group.

Intervention Method:

After providing necessary explanations and making arrangements about the topic of the study, number of sessions, duration of each session and topic of the workshop for managers of consultancy centers and health centers, the advertisement regarding the training workshop was installed in these centers. Then members were selected and randomly put in the study and control groups. First, the groups were familiarized with the project to gain their trust and cooperation and then the general objectives of the workshop as well as the conditions for participating in the workshop were explained. Then the couples were assigned into study and control groups and a pre-test was conducted. Workshops were held for the study groups for eight 90-minute sessions which were held twice a week. Ellis marriage therapy training was thus provided to the study group; however, the control group was not exposed to any independent variable. At the end of the workshops, both the study and control groups were measured using a test. The summary of training sessions based on Ellis marriage therapy training is provided below.

Session 1: Introduction, statement of the objectives and rules and regulations, introductory discussion, answering the questions and ambiguities of the visitors, getting the written agreement of the participants.

Session 2: Investigating the perspectives of couples with regards of the factors of marriage conflict, correcting the perspectives based on REBCT theory and ABC training

Session 3: helping couples to discover their irrational beliefs concerning themselves or their partners, identifying the irrational reactions and behaviors, training the methods for dealing with irrational beliefs. In this session, couples were asked to choose a number of stimulating events and fill out a table based on that particular event.

Session 4: measuring skill development and progress of couples with regards to discovering their irrational beliefs, identifying and choosing rational beliefs, training the methods of arguments for correcting and changing irrational beliefs

Session 5: familiarizing couples with the effect of using rational or irrational words with regards to creating different sentiments after self-discussion. Then the following table was provided to them to fill out and to present to the consultant in the following session.

Session 6: Teaching mental imaging in order to increase individual's power in controlling their emotions and correcting their irrational beliefs, teaching how to control negative emotions and getting rid of the habits can cause conflicts. Teaching relaxation in order to control anger and tension-causing behaviors.

Session 7: Teaching the accurate method of establishing relationships, evaluating achieved outcomes, end of consultancy.

Session 8: Conducting the test.

This study used the questionnaire of marital conflicts in order to collect data. It is a 42-question instrument in which the questions are scored based on Likert scale, from 1 to 5. The high score indicates high conflict and the low score indicates lack of conflict. Cronbach Alpha for the whole questionnaire was between 0.53 and 0.73 (20 and 21).

RESULTS

Table 1 demonstrates the descriptive findings of the study. Based on Table 1, it could be concluded that the scores pertaining to the study group were decreased in comparison to the control group. In order to study the significance of these changes, co-variance analysis was conducted. Lewin Test confirms the hypothesis that the variances are equal.

Co-variance analysis is used to analyses the data; the results are summarized in Table 3.

The results presented in Table 3. Demonstrate that there are differences between the control group and the study group with regards to scales of the marital conflict test. In other words, the independent variable of marriage therapy using Ellis approach results in a significant decrease in conflicts in all scales. Therefore, the research hypothesis is confirmed in all sub-scales.

Table 1. Mean and standard deviation of the total scores of marital conflict.

Variable		test		test-Pre		up-Follow	
		SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean
Marital Conflicts	Study Group	36.03	144.66	20.95	163.46	32.61	131.90
	Control Group	13.71	170.14	15.5	173.76		

Table 2. Results of the Lewin test to study equality of variances

Variable	F	Degree of freedom 2	Degree of freedom 1	Significance level
Marital conflicts	37.5	58	2	0.16
Cooperation	42.74	58	2	0.22
Sexual relationship	134.23	58	2	0.30
Negative emotional reactions	80.43	58	2	0.11
Attracting child's support	81.21	58	2	0.09
Personal relationship with family members	87.87	58	2	0.35
Family relationship with family members	43.87	58	2	0.15
Separation of financial affairs	44.12	58	2	0.12

Table 3. Summary of the co-variance analysis

Scale	Degree of effect	F	Mean of roots	Statistical power	Degree of freedom	Sum of roots	Level of significance
Marital Conflicts	0.18	13.19	399.69	0.946	1	3991.69	0.001
Reduction of cooperation	0.184	12.88	91.51	0.942	1	91.51	0.001
Decrease in sexual relationship	0.215	15.64	73.369	0.973	1	73.369	0.000
Increase in negative emotional reactions	.0212	15.67	121.57	0.970	1	121.57	0.000
Increase in personal relationship with one's family	0.191	13.47	100.21	0.950	1	100.21	0.001
Attracting the child's support	0.148	9.90	38.83	0.872	1	38.83	0.003
Decrease in relationship with family members of the spouse	0.132	8.68	128.7	0.825	1	128.70	0.005
Separation of financial affairs	0.155	10.46	161.10	0.889	1	161.1	0.002

DISCUSSION

Findings of this study indicate that Ellis marriage therapy decreases the total amounts of marital conflicts in the test phase in comparison to the pre-test phase. This finding is consistent with the results of the studies by Molavi et al. (2005), Blach (1978) and Motamedin (2005).

The findings of this study are also consistent with Ellis theory that claims a reduction in irrational beliefs using cognitive, behavioral, and emotional techniques will result in a decrease in marital conflicts and confusion.

In order to explain the results with regard to the factor of "decrease in cooperation", it could be mentioned that irrational thoughts of couples will result a sort of grudge and thus a reduction in cooperation in tasks due to the problems in their relationship. As a result, instead of getting closer to one another, couples distance from each other and this will decrease cooperation.

Concerning the effectiveness of marriage therapy of Ellis on the decrease in sexual relationship, it could be said that consultancy sessions focus on fighting the negative thoughts of the patients as well as their irrational thoughts with regard to sexual interests of couples and such beliefs that intercourse must be based on one's desire and that refusing intercourse by the spouse does not devalue the other person are targeted. In addition, this approach uses such emotional techniques as a rational mental imaging, emotions, self-assertions, powerful encounter, role-plays, and the like to decrease negative emotional reactions.

This approach applies useful communication techniques and discusses irrational beliefs while avoiding arguments to teach couples that they do not require gaining the support of their kids and issues could be dealt with without the intervention of children. Concerning the increase in personal relationship with family, when couples are convinced

that they need to resolve the issues without any conflicts and they need to question their irrational thoughts, there is no longer any need to go to other family members to seek relief, but their relationship would be balanced and without any expectation about the marital life.

This explanation could be applied to the sub-scale of decrease in family relationship with the spouse's family. When couples learn effective communication techniques and when their feelings of obligation, being forced, and low tolerance is decreased and when they learn the difference between demand and need, they show better coordination in terms of their financial affairs. Results of this study could affect the influence of the tasks of family consultants.

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